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Controversies in Applied Linguistics

Barbara Seidlhofer, editor

As one of Seidlhofer's students suggested, discussing controversies between experts in one's chosen field is "a bit like watching your parents having an argument" (p.1). Rather than upset its readers, this new book aims to clarify the issues at the heart of these five controversies in applied linguistics: the global spread of English, corpus linguistics and language teaching, critical discourse analysis, second language acquisition, and the nature of applied linguistics. Within each controversy, the editor has identified "sub-controversies" and they are explored in depth, usually by examining the argumentative exchanges between scholars originally published in various academic journals. Among those whose articles appear are: Christopher Brumfit, Alan Firth, Ronald Carter, and Henry Widdowson. The final section of the book is a list of study questions intended to help readers focus on the content, organization, and tone of the arguments. To take one of the five controversies as an example, nearly seventy pages are dedicated to the topic of global English, which is divided into three parts: standard vs. non-native English, linguistic imperialism and politics, and a discussion of David Crystal's 1997 book *English as a Global Language*. In the first part, Randolph Quirk and Braj B. Kachru deliberate whether standard (native) English or non-native English should dominate in the quest for a global English. In the second part, students in a graduate seminar debate Robert Phillipson on the political implications of the worldwide spread of English. Finally, Phillipson reverses the roles and attacks Crystal and his views on the spread of English, the meaning of progress, and the consequences of globalization. This book is organized in a way that readers unfamiliar with any of these controversies can still follow the discussions. Readers already familiar with the ongoing debates will find the editor's brief (and neutral) introductions welcome summaries of important topical issues facing everyone involved in the field of teaching English as a second/foreign language.

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Linguistic Genocide in Education—Or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas

"If things continue, we may kill over 90 percent of the world's oral languages in the next 100 years" (p. ix). With that sobering prediction as a backdrop, Skutnabb-Kangas provides a timely and unique contribution to the study of minority languages and their role in culture and human rights. As biological diversity in nature leads to a healthy ecosystem, Skutnabb-Kangas argues for a similar connection between linguistic diversity and a healthy planet. Citing the Sámi as an example, she points out a decline in wild reindeer hunting in the 1700s and the consequent loss of culture and language as children of former hunters entered Norwegian schools. The major topics covered in this truly global study include bilingualism, the relationship between biodiversity and linguistic and cultural diversity, self-determination, state policies and the effect of power structures towards languages, and alternatives to linguistic genocide. The book is organized into three sections: Part 1 introduces the subject and describes the state of the world's languages; Part 2 looks at linguistic genocide and the effects of state policies and globalization; finally, Part 3 puts forth a strategy for linguistic human rights and outlines the role of education in helping to solve the problem of linguistic genocide. The author points out that she is not opposed to the global spread of English, except in places where "English is learned at the cost of the mother tongues" (p. xxxiii). While it is unlikely the reader will agree with everything in this book, its passion and commitment to linguistic diversity is without challenge. Any foreign language teacher, educational policy maker, or student of languages, whether a specialist or new to the field, will find this provocative book worth reading. For further information on this topic, visit the author's website: <http://babel.ruc.dk/~tovesku/>

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